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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ECONOMY  
OF THE  
WEST CENTRAL GEORGIA AREA

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## INTRODUCTION

The eight-county West Central Georgia Area features a strong agricultural base and an expanding manufacturing complex. Agriculture will continue to maintain its position as a major contributor to the economic base of the area, but manufacturing employment is expected to show sharper increases. The trend of the 1960-1970 decade will be toward an equalization or balancing of the importance of agriculture and manufacturing to the economy.

A number of problems and opportunities are highlighted in the analyses reflected in this report on the counties currently represented in the West Central Georgia Area Planning and Development Commission. These counties include Crisp, Dooly, Macon, Marion, Schley, Sumter, Taylor, and Webster.

This study analyzes area trends and the present employment structure and reviews other highlights of the economy of the area. Its main purpose is to provide perspective for more detailed studies and for the establishment of active development goals and efforts.

## POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE WEST CENTRAL GEORGIA AREA

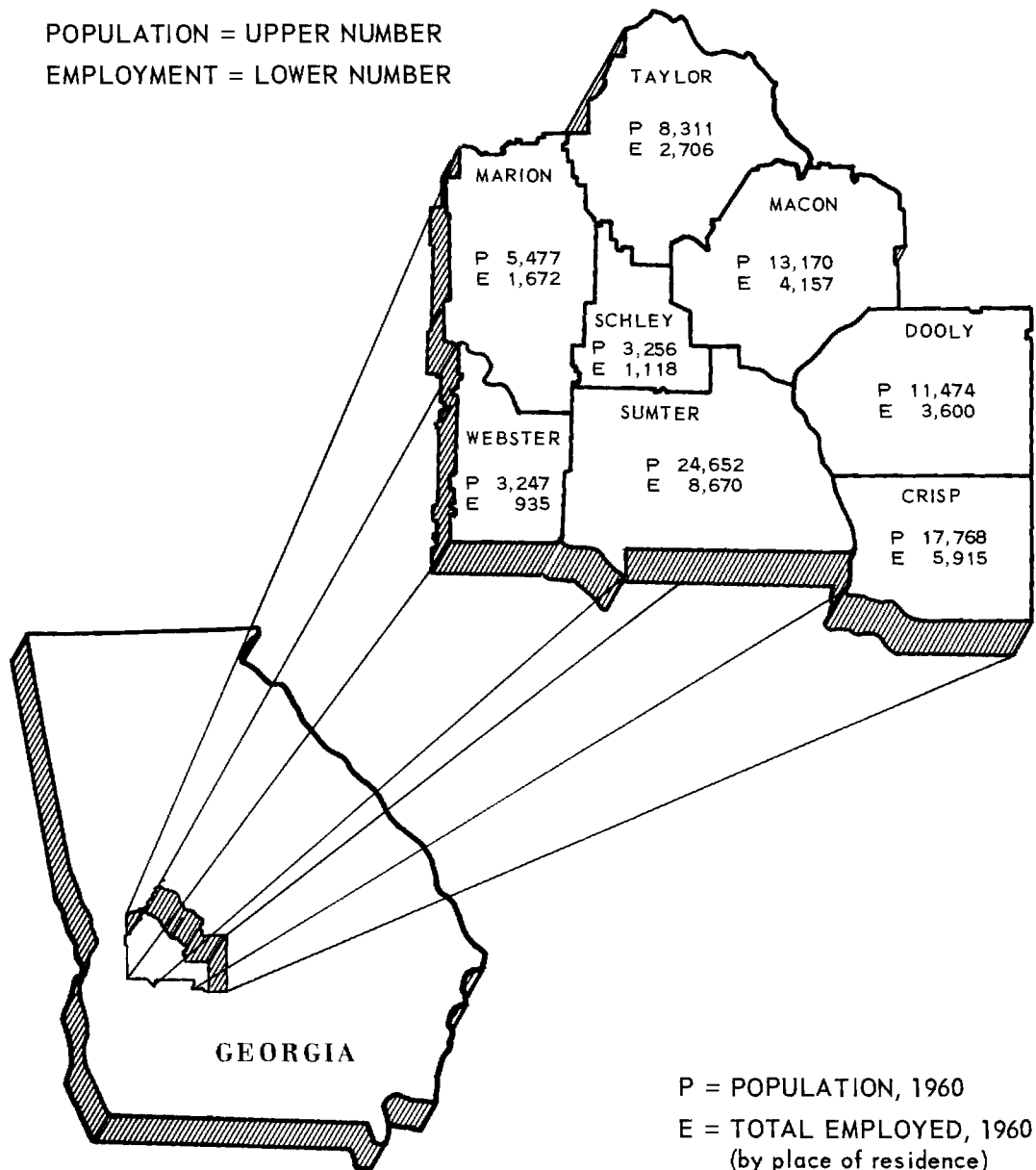
Map 1 (on the facing page) focuses on eight Georgia counties which have organized the West Central Georgia Area Planning and Development Commission. It shows the 1960 population and resident employment in each county, totaling 87,355 and 28,773, respectively, for the eight-county area.

In 1960, population ranged from 3,247 in Webster County (156th among Georgia's 159 counties) to 24,652 in Sumter County (31st in rank). The West Central Georgia Area's most populous county, Sumter, had a total employment of 8,670 in 1960, or almost a third of the group total. Resident employment in Sumter and Crisp counties alone totaled slightly more than that for the other six counties combined.

# MAP 1

## POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE WEST CENTRAL GEORGIA AREA, 1960

POPULATION = UPPER NUMBER  
EMPLOYMENT = LOWER NUMBER



P = POPULATION, 1960  
E = TOTAL EMPLOYED, 1960  
(by place of residence)

## DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE WEST CENTRAL GEORGIA AREA

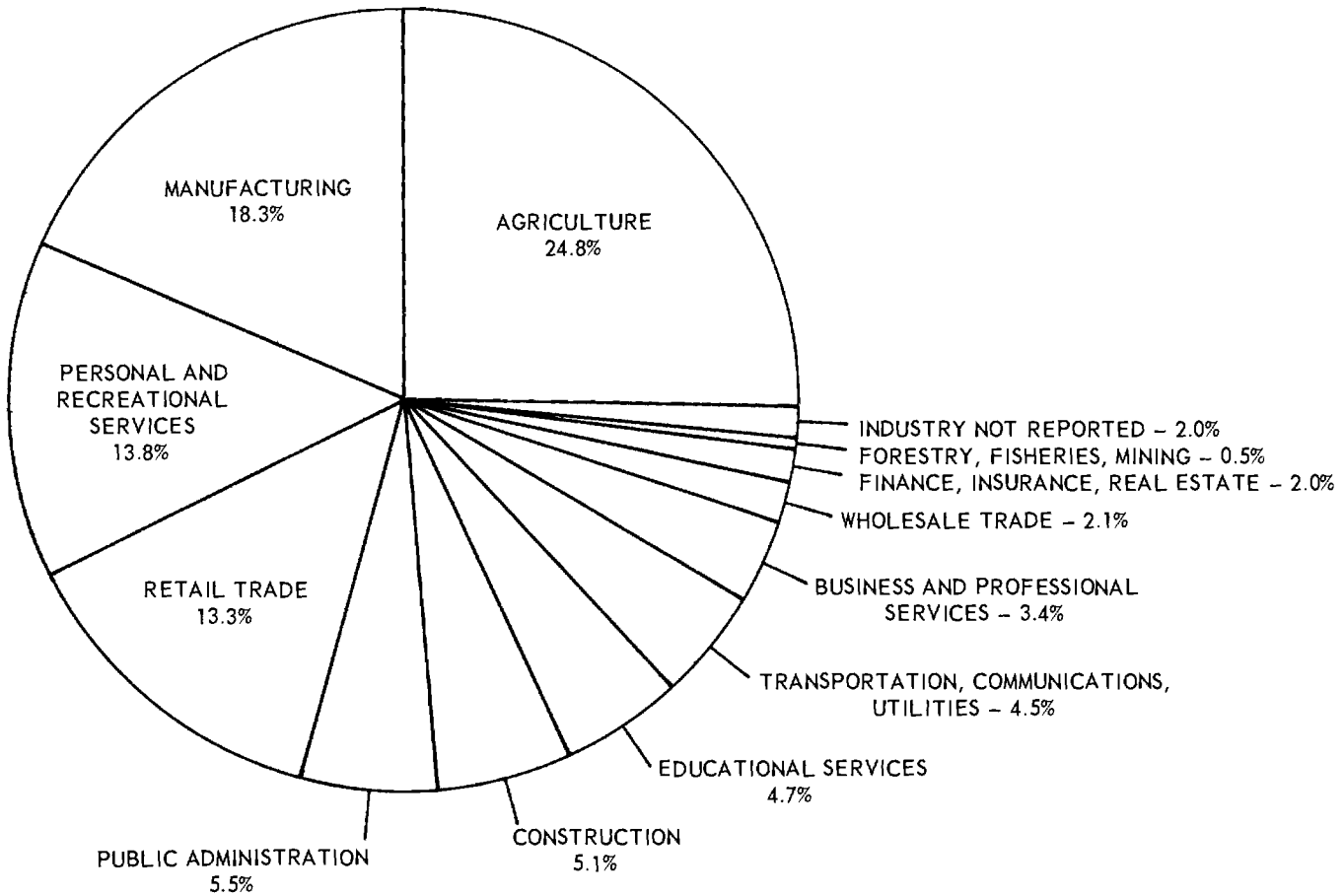
Chart 1 shows the percentage distribution of all resident employment in the eight-county area. The leading sector in 1960 was agriculture, which employed 7,147 workers, as compared with 5,258 in manufacturing, 3,956 in personal and recreational services,<sup>1/</sup> and 3,833 in retail trade. These four categories, combined, accounted for 70.2% of the total resident employment.

Sectors of intermediate importance include public administration (1,582), construction (1,464), and educational services (1,365). The combination of these seven leading sectors represented 85.5% of the area's total employment in 1960.

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<sup>1/</sup> "Personal and recreational services" comprise repair services; services in private households, hotels, and motels; laundry and dry cleaning services; and entertainment and recreation services. "Business and professional services" include advertising, accounting, auditing, and bookkeeping services; welfare, religious, and nonprofit membership organizations; hospitals; and other professional and related services (except educational).

CHART 1  
DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE  
WEST CENTRAL GEORGIA AREA, 1960



Source: U. S. Census of Population, 1960

COMPARATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT  
IN THE WEST CENTRAL GEORGIA AREA, GEORGIA, AND THE UNITED STATES

Chart 2 compares the employment mix in the eight-county area with that in Georgia and the United States as a whole.

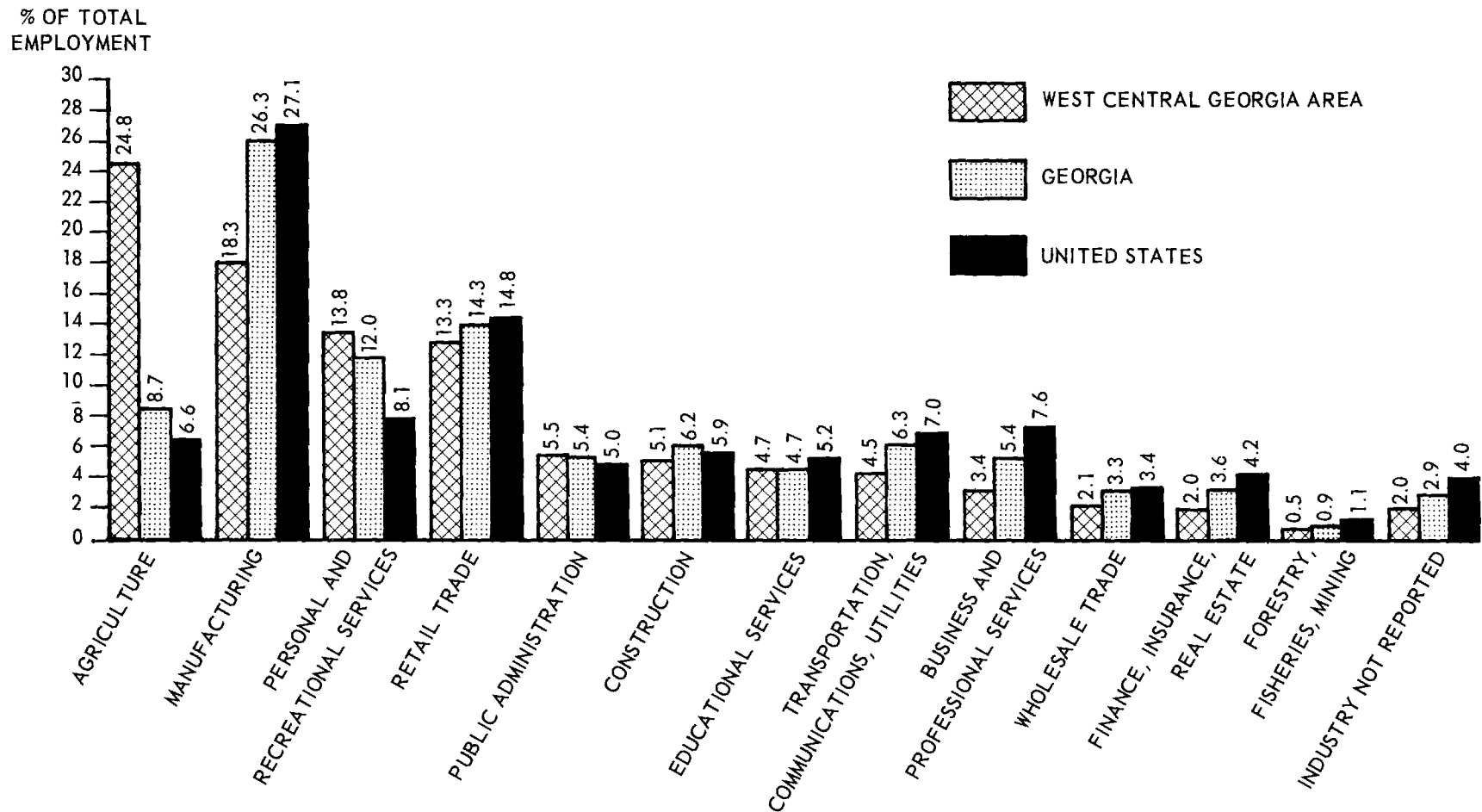
The most noticeable variance is in agriculture. Although there was an approximate 50% loss in farm jobs in the eight-county area between 1950 and 1960, agriculture is the leading employer, and the West Central Georgia Area has a much greater proportion of agricultural employees than do the state or nation. Employment in personal and recreational services also shows a higher proportion in the area than in either Georgia or the United States, while the area's public administration employment percentage has a slight edge on that of the state, both being greater than that for the United States as a whole.

On the other hand, manufacturing, the second largest employer in the area, has a smaller percentage of the total work force than in the state and the nation. In all other activities, the West Central Georgia Area employment percentages are less than those of both the state and nation, except for educational services, where the area and the state exhibit the same percentage of the employees.



CHART 2

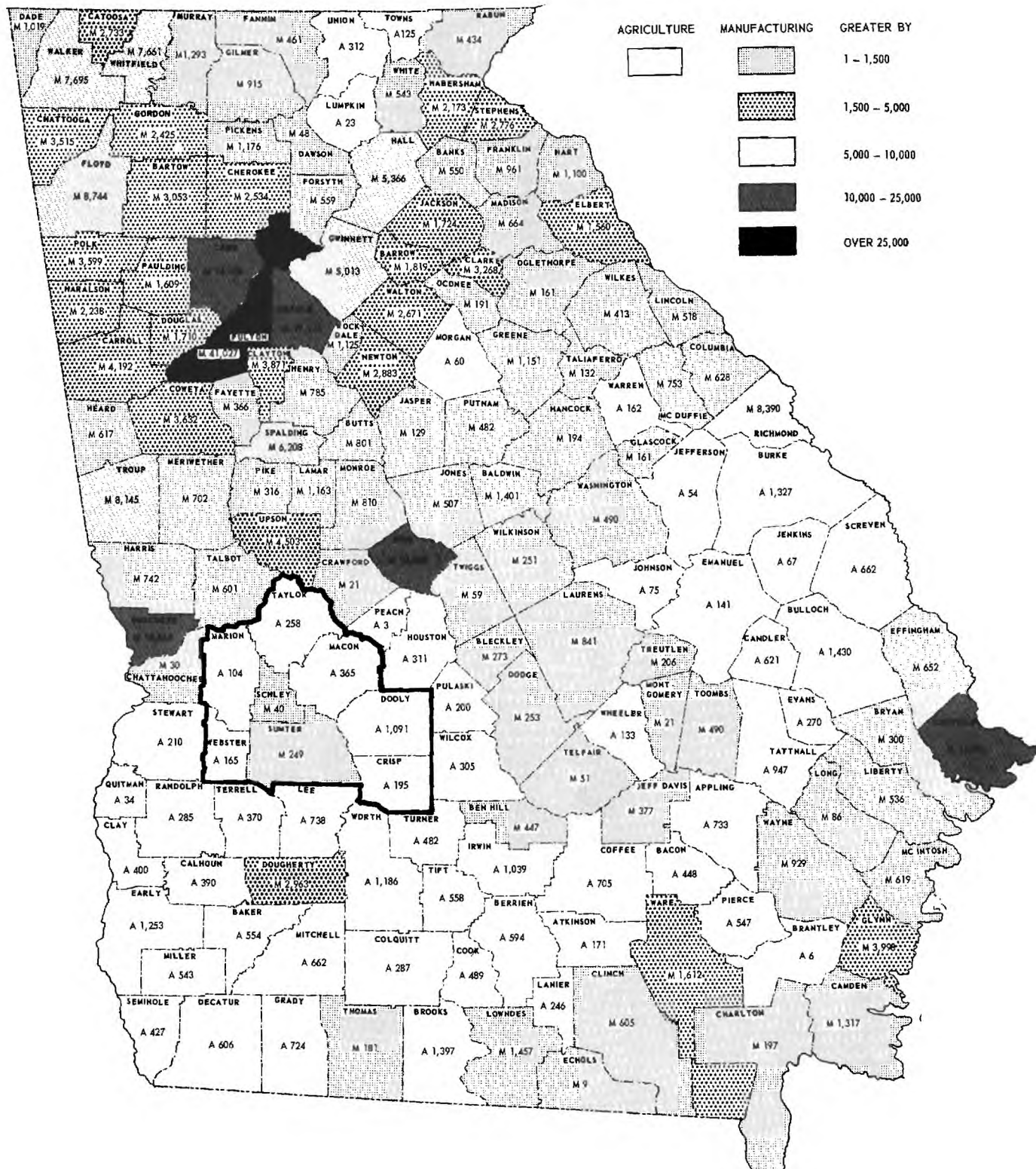
DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE WEST CENTRAL GEORGIA AREA,  
COMPARED WITH GEORGIA AND THE UNITED STATES, 1960



AGRICULTURAL AND MANUFACTURING EMPLOYMENT  
IN GEORGIA AND THE WEST CENTRAL GEORGIA AREA

Map 2 compares agricultural and manufacturing employment by county in Georgia, by place of residence. Manufacturing leads agriculture in 104 of the state's 159 counties. Within the local area under study, manufacturing employment is greater in only two of the counties and trails agriculture in the other six counties. Counties in which manufacturing jobs predominate are Sumter (by 249) and Schley (by 40). Agriculture leads by 104 in Marion and 1,091 in Dooly, the counties with the smallest and largest margins of difference, respectively. In the other four counties, the agricultural employment lead ranges from 165 to 365 persons.

# MAP 2 PREDOMINANCE OF MANUFACTURING OR AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEES, 1960 (by place of residence)



## DISTRIBUTION OF MANUFACTURING EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Table 1 compares the distribution of manufacturing employment in the West Central Georgia Area with the all-Georgia and national distributions.

Of the 5,258 area residents employed in manufacturing as of 1960, 53.6% were in nondurable goods manufacture. This is lower than the all-Georgia percentage (66.4) but is higher than the national average (43.9%).

Leading industry groups in the study area include furniture, lumber, and wood products (29.1% of total manufacturing employment), apparel (24.1%), food and kindred products (14.3%), and textiles (7.1%). All but textiles are more prominent in the study area than in the all-Georgia and national patterns. The textile goods percentage is much less than the all-Georgia proportion but higher than that of the United States.

There are three counties which have sizable manufacturing employment figures as compared with the other five. They are Sumter with 1,742, Crisp with 994, and Macon county with 864 manufacturing employees.

The eight-county area has 14 factories employing 100 or more persons, with four of these employing 250 or more. These are distributed among five cities -- Americus, Cordele, Ellaville, Montezuma, and Vienna.

The largest plant, from the point of view of employment, is the Manhattan Shirt Company plant in Americus, with over 900 employees. A recent expansion of Philips Industries of Georgia, Americus aluminum window manufacturer, is expected to produce 120 new jobs.

Major products or product classifications of the eight-county area's largest manufacturing employers are listed below.

<u>Industry Group</u>	<u>Product(s) or Product Classification</u>
Wood Products	Furniture
Food Products	Frozen fruits and vegetables
Apparel	Infants' wear, children's clothes, work clothes, shirts, slacks, and shorts
Transportation Equipment	Mobile homes
Fabricated Metals	Windows for homes and mobile homes, hydraulic shears and baling presses
Chemicals	Fertilizers

Table 1

DISTRIBUTION OF MANUFACTURING EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY  
IN THE WEST CENTRAL GEORGIA AREA, GEORGIA, AND THE UNITED STATES, 1960

(By place of residence)

<u>Manufacturing Category</u>	<u>West Central Georgia Area</u>		<u>State of Georgia</u>	<u>United States</u>
	<u>(No.)</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>(%)</u>
Manufacturing, total	5,258	100.0	100.0	100.0
Durable goods:	2,441	46.4	33.6	56.1
Furniture, lumber, and wood products	1,529	29.1	12.5	6.1
Primary metals	67	1.3	1.5	7.0
Fabricated metals	41	.8	2.6	7.4
Machinery, nonelectrical	239	4.5	2.8	8.9
Electrical machinery	8	.1	2.0	8.5
Motor vehicles and equipment	149	2.8	3.2	4.8
Transportation equipment, except motor vehicles	313	6.0	4.3	5.6
Other durable goods	95	1.8	4.7	7.8
Nondurable goods:	2,817	53.6	66.4	43.9
Food and kindred products	754	14.3	12.2	10.4
Textiles	373	7.1	26.0	5.5
Apparel	1,266	24.1	12.9	6.6
Printing and publishing	167	3.2	3.9	6.5
Chemicals and allied products	200	3.8	3.8	4.9
Other nondurable goods	57	1.1	7.6	10.0

Source: U. S. Census of Population, 1960

## EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

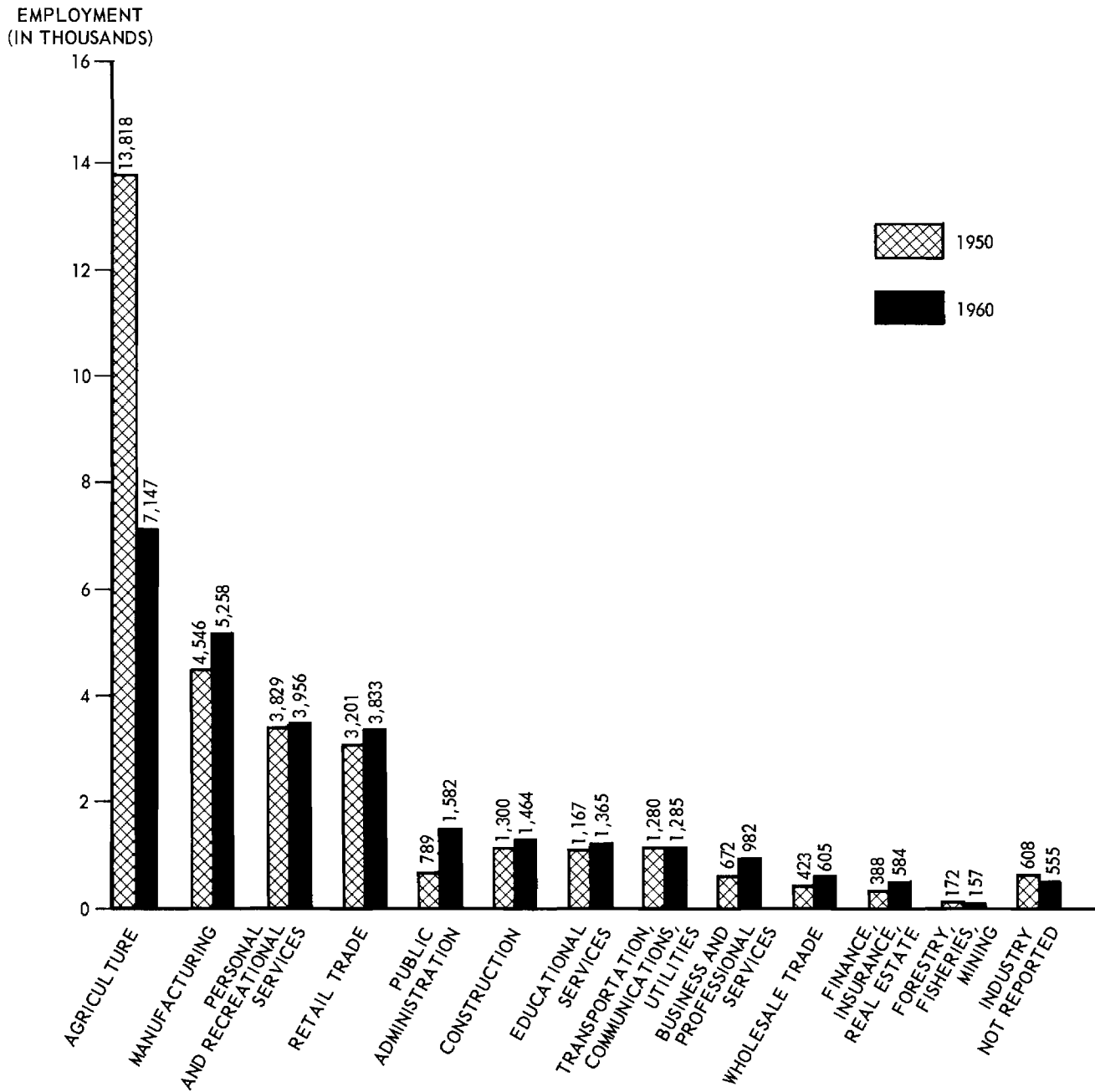
Chart 3 shows employment by industry for the eight-county area for 1950 and 1960. All the nonagricultural sectors gained in the 10-year period, but the major decrease in agricultural employment led to an over-all net loss of 3,420 jobs. This loss, which cut employment by over 10.6%, contrasts with over-all gains of 10.4% for all of Georgia and 14.5% for the country as a whole.

In 1950 over 43% of total employment in the area was in agriculture and forestry. Between 1950 and 1960 nearly half of these farm jobs disappeared, and by 1960 agriculture and forestry represented only 25% of total employment. In spite of this heavy loss, agriculture remained the most important source of employment in the area. Manufacturing increased by 15.7%, but was still in second place in 1960, with 18.3% of total employment, compared with 14.1% in 1950.

The greatest gain, both relatively and in absolute terms, was in public administration, which more than doubled over the 10-year period. Retail trade also had a substantial increase of 632 jobs -- a gain of nearly 20% between 1950 and 1960. Absolute changes by sector over the decade are shown below.

<u>Total net change (loss)</u>	<u>-3,420</u>
Public administration	793
Manufacturing	712
Retail trade	632
Business and professional services	310
Educational services	198
Finance, insurance, real estate	196
Wholesale trade	182
Construction	164
Personal and recreational services	127
Transportation, communications, utilities	5
Forestry, fisheries, mining	-15
Industry not reported	-53
Agriculture	-6,671

**CHART 3**  
**EMPLOYMENT TRENDS IN THE WEST CENTRAL GEORGIA AREA,**  
**1950 AND 1960**



A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE PROBLEMS  
AND OPPORTUNITIES CONFRONTING WEST CENTRAL GEORGIA

Problems

Data from the 1960 Census of Population and other recent censuses indicate that the eight-county West Central Georgia Area is a low-income, thinly populated section of Georgia. This area represents approximately 4.6% of the state's land area, but has 2.2% of its residents and only 1.4% of Georgia's total income. No county had a median family income close to the state median of \$4,208. Sumter County was the highest in the area with \$2,950. The other seven counties were below that figure, with Webster County having the lowest median -- only 38% of the state figure.

The area's shares of total land area, farm jobs, and number of farms are higher than its portions of the state's population, housing units, factories, and trade and service establishments. This highlights the still preponderant role of agriculture in the area, despite the drop in farm jobs during the 1950-1960 decade from 42.9% to 24.8% of the employed population.

Compared with its share of Georgia's residents, the area is deficient in total jobs, manufacturing jobs, bank deposits, retail and wholesale sales, and sound housing units.

Between 1950 and 1960 there was a net loss of 3,420 jobs in the area and a decline in population of 6,639 persons. These figures show only the net result of major shifts in population during the decade. The loss of farm jobs caused thousands of people to leave the rural areas to seek work elsewhere. When allowance is made for the natural increase (total births less total deaths) in the 10 years between 1950 and 1960, every county showed heavy out-migration. Nearly 24,000 people left the eight-county area during this period.

Analysis of the net change in population by age groups emphasizes the loss of workers:

	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>Change 1950-1960</u>
Under 18 years	38,975	37,564	-1,411
18-64 years	47,726	41,354	-6,372
65 and over	<u>7,293</u>	<u>8,437</u>	<u>+1,144</u>
	93,994	87,355	-6,639



The loss of population might have been even more severe but for the fact that three metropolitan cities are within commuting distance -- Columbus to the west, Macon to the northeast, and Albany to the south. Between 4,000 and 5,000 workers live within the eight-county area but commute to work outside -- this is in addition to the commuting across county lines that takes place within the eight-county area.

Since the number of jobs in agriculture is likely to continue to decline, the area is faced with a further loss of population unless local nonfarm industry can be stimulated.

All eight of the counties in the West Central Georgia Area are eligible for Area Redevelopment Administration (ARA) benefits.

In 1960 agricultural workers outnumbered manufacturing workers in all but two counties -- Schley and Sumter. Trends of the 1950-1960 decade and the activity in the first years of the 1960's indicate that manufacturing jobs will soon equal agricultural jobs in the very near future. Further shifts from agricultural employment are to be expected, but at a reduced rate. However, farm production is high, livestock production is increasing, and agricultural activity will remain a vital factor in the area in the foreseeable future.

While there is considerable diversity to the area's resident manufacturing activity, much of it is related to seasonal, low-wage industry. Food and kindred products, furniture, lumber, and wood products, textiles, and apparel accounted for approximately 75% of the manufacturing employment in 1960. The nationwide outlook for future employment in apparel, wood products, textiles, and food products compares unfavorably with total manufacturing, according to forecasts by the National Planning Association. Recent announcements of expansions of existing firms in the metalworking field are encouraging signs, however. The expansion of the mobile home industry and related manufacturing operations shows that the area's manufacturing base is expanding.

Inter-area competition for business and industry can be expected to continue and intensify in the years ahead. The increasing importance of technical skills and basic aptitudes for training will have a crucial bearing on the area's ability to compete successfully for many types of industry. The area is fortunate to have a state-owned vocational-technical training school in Americus, as well as nearby schools in Columbus, Macon, and Thomaston. Comparisons

based on the educational status of residents 25 years old and over show that all eight counties fall below the state's average in median number of school years completed. There is a need for the continuous upgrading of all educational facilities.

### Opportunities

Development of "Strength" Industries. Industries which have potentials based on existing agricultural and forest resources in the area should be investigated for further development. Such industry potentials include food processing, meat packing, frozen foods, transportation equipment, and timber processing into finished goods such as furniture, yard toys and furniture, and hardboard. When investigation and research have revealed the feasibility of specific industries, these opportunities should be brought to the attention of interested area people and to prospective concerns outside the area. A continuous effort is needed to identify and manufacture new products which can be made from existing area raw materials. There is also a need to develop such service industries as machine shops, foundries, and plating, anodizing, and metal-treating plants.

Development of "Footloose" Industries. Existing area industry already is largely oriented to agricultural and forest resources (e.g., food processing, furniture, lumber and wood products, textiles, and apparel). There is a continuing need for more diversified industry. Products which have a high value and low weight, such as electronic devices, small appliances, optics, cameras, and light machinery, should be sought (though these demand a higher type of technical skill than the area labor now possesses). These are called "footloose industries" since they can locate almost anywhere because freight rates to the markets are a relatively small part of the cost of selling the products. These "footloose" companies can help greatly in diversifying the present industrial base. In addition, this type of industry is a large employer of male labor, which is needed in the area to balance present industry, which hires predominantly female labor.

Development of Tourist and Recreational Potentials. The dollar income which can be produced by tourism is appreciable. West Central Georgia has lagged in the development of this industry because of its geographical location,

the relative lack of scenic attractions, and ineffective promotion of its attractions.

While tourism may never become a major industry throughout the area, much can be achieved through a planned program of development of attractions such as historical markers, plantations, and other points of interest. A promotional campaign of some magnitude, together with economic development of scenic attractions, tourist facilities, and good restaurants, will be needed.

Attention should be given to Lake Blackshear and its tourist potential. Possible use of the lake in its present natural condition as a haven for fishermen would make it more distinctive than the many swimming and boating lakes in the area, which all look alike.

The Andersonville Prison Park and National Cemetery probably will be the most significant tourist attraction within the area. A well-planned program for its development as a first-rate tourist attraction should be undertaken.

Development of Retail and Wholesale Trade Potentials. Retail and wholesale trade activity is largely dependent upon the over-all economy of the area. A strong economy generates much trade activity; a weak one manifests itself by declining or static trade activity. As the West Central Georgia economy becomes stronger, growth will occur in retail and wholesale trade.

However, positive steps can be taken to improve the situation by campaigns to upgrade the present activity levels of area merchants through education in modern selling techniques, training of employees, and promotional campaigns.

River and Stream Development. The report of the United States Study Commission for the Southeast River Basins highlights a number of proposed river and stream projects in the West Central Georgia Commission area. Among these is an early-action plan for the development of Lower Auchumpkee Creek (Taylor County). This is a power, navigation, flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife project. Preliminary figures indicate the annual costs and benefits of the project will be \$2,819,000 and \$3,233,000, respectively.

Other longer-term proposals include the Muckalee and the Kinchafonee projects. The former will provide benefits for flood control, recreation, fish and wildlife, and water supply; the latter project will provide benefits for fish and wildlife and flood control.

These three projects need further study and analysis to prove their feasibility. Action at the local level by the West Central Georgia Commission can materially accelerate the development of these and other river and stream projects.

Transportation. Interstate 75, which passes through two of the eastern counties of the commission, is a means by which to draw people into the area. Industry, which moves its finished goods and receives raw materials by motor freight, is looking for locations close to such interstate highways. In addition, the tourist makes many stops at restaurants and motels which locate at community interchanges of these highways. The new employment opportunities consequently created at service stations and motels are of great importance to the growth of the area.

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